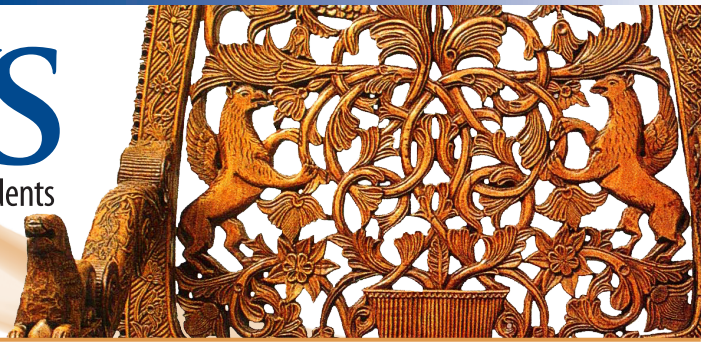


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Brick by Brick

By Ozer Bergman

“[The Israelites] built the cities of Pitom and Ramses as supply centers for Pharaoh...[The Egyptians] made the lives of [the Israelites] miserable with harsh labor involving mortar and bricks...intending to break them” (Exodus 1:11, 14).

“I [Reb Noson] heard that [Rebbe Nachman] once said to his chassidim, ‘Why do you have to worry? All you have to do is bring the bricks and the mortar. With that, I’ll build glorious, majestic buildings.’ [Reb Noson comments: The Rebbe meant, all we need to do is simply involve ourselves in serving God with Torah study, prayer and mitzvahs, and he makes with that whatever he makes. He very much drew out the word ‘buildings’ in order to stress how beautiful and majestic these buildings are.]”

Riddle: What do anti-Semitic dictators and genuine tzaddikim have in common? They have an excellent grasp of how mighty the Jewish people are. Of course, they understand that might differently, and try to direct it towards very different ends, but they have no doubt that it is real. Pharaoh warns his subjects that the Israelites (aka Jews) are a potential fifth column and says, “[They will] war with us, and rise out of the earth” (Exodus 1:10). A tzaddik could use almost the very same words and tell his community, “If we battle the Egyptian influence that envelops us, we will rise above our attachment to the physical and material trappings of this world.”

There are, of course, many, many differences between how anti-Semitic dictators and tzaddikim work. For example, Pharaoh, because he is afraid of Jewish influence, wants to subjugate the Jews and have them build entire cities that will strengthen and enrich Pharaoh, but endanger and impoverish them.\* He lets them know what they are building, for whom and why, in order to break their spirits as well as their bodies.

The tzaddik, on the other hand, is afraid that Jews will not fully use their influence! So he motivates them. “I know that you do not see or understand the ultimate greatness and importance of what you are you doing. But I do. Perhaps you think your contribution is meaningless, or the goal futile, or the master selfish. Not so. What I am

building is beautiful beyond description. Its function can, at best, only be hinted to. It benefits all of us.

“But I cannot build it alone. We must work together. I need you. You must bring the ‘bricks’—the mitzvahs, Torah, prayer, charity, kindness and the rest—and the ‘mortar’—the beliefs and attitudes that hold them all together, like faith in God and in His tzaddikim, humility and love for your fellow Jew. I will put it all together.”

On the verse “A human being is born to toil” (Job 5:7), our Sages comment, “Fortunate is the one who toils in Torah” (*Sanhedrin* 99b)—in its study and in its observance. It was no big honor to be Pharaoh’s slave. The Egyptians were equal-opportunity enslavers. It is a great honor to enlist and assist the tzaddikim, even in the smallest way, in their work. It is the greatest honor to be a Jew, to be part of the people whose mission is to nourish, better and fashion the world, the people about whom the Creator says, “Yisrael in whom I take pride” (Isaiah 49:3).

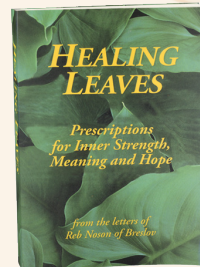
\* The Midrash on Exodus 1:11 says that the Hebrew word *miskenot* (translated here as “supply centers”) is related to the words *sakanah*, danger, and *misken*, indigent (*Shemot Rabbah* 1:14).

Based on Chayey Moharan (Tzaddik) #293  
A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Adapted by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Each person must search tirelessly and relentlessly for what he has lost [that is, his perception and awareness of God’s glory]. Even if he has not yet found anything at all, he has nonetheless found a great deal, just by the effort he has put into the search. (*Letter #71*)

It is certainly necessary to thank God for His kindnesses every day; this thanksgiving is the essential delight of the world to come, which a person must draw upon himself each and every day. This is the purpose for which we were created – to constantly thank and praise His Great Name every day. (*Letter #445*)

# With All Due Respect

by Yossi Katz

“[Moses] went out and saw two Jews fighting...[Moses] said, ‘Now I understand’” (Exodus 2:13-14).

Rashi explains that Moses always wondered what sin the Jews had done, worse than all the other nations, to deserve the harsh punishment of slave labor. Now he understood that this was a fitting punishment for them.

How do we understand this? Was the Jewish sin of fighting worse than the actions of the other nations? Wasn't the history of the other nations filled with war, murder and many more terrible deeds?

The entire world was created for the Jewish people who would accept and receive the Torah. Because of this, the Jewish people were given *kavod* (honor) and rulership in order to influence the world in a positive way. The soul has its root in honor and therefore it is automatically drawn to honor. Not only the Jews were exiled in Egypt – so was their honor. When Jewish honor falls to the forces of impurity, Jewish souls are also drawn to the side of impurity and fall into exile.

{ *How have we sunk so low?* }

It was very beneficial for Joseph to precede the Jews into Egypt. He elevated the impure honor of the Egyptians and brought it into holiness. Then he was able to draw the Jewish souls down to Egypt. He told his brothers, “Tell my father about all my honor in Egypt” (Genesis 45:13). Our Sages say it was fitting for Jacob to descend to Egypt in iron chains. Only because of the power of Joseph were the Jews able to be freed from exile (*Shabbat* 89b).

Moses contemplated how Jewish honor had fallen and how the Jewish souls were ensnared by the Egyptians. He then witnessed a Jewish man being degraded and beaten by an Egyptian. He wondered why they had been brought so low, even lower than all the other nations. But then he saw two Jews fighting and he understood. Had the Jews had proper honor and respect among themselves, and especially for the tzaddikim, the Egyptians would not have had any power over them whatsoever. The source of the Egyptian's strength was the lack of honor and respect amongst the Jewish people.

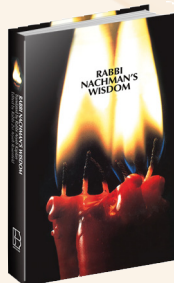
May we merit to honor the tzaddikim and find the points of righteousness in all our fellow Jews, and together merit to go up from this exile as well, speedily and in our days. Amen.

*Based on Likutey Halachot, Hilkhoh Chovel B'Chaveiro 3*

## SIDEPATH

*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt"l*

2. It is very good to rely on God completely. As each day begins, I place my every movement, and that of my children and dependants, in God's hands, asking that everything goes as God would want it. This is very good, and I have no worries. Whether or not things go well, I am completely reliant on God. Whatever He desires, I have already asked that I do only His will.



Before each Shabbat or festival, I also place my observance in God's hands, asking that it all be as He would wish. I can then celebrate it without worrying that I am perhaps not doing something properly. I am completely reliant on God, and everything is in His hands.

3. It cannot be put into writing how much the Rebbe emphasized God's greatness. He stressed that it is beyond all measure. God does so many wonderful things that absolutely no one can really appreciate them all. We may speak of God, but we know absolutely nothing. It is said that the goal of all knowledge [of God] is to realize that one knows nothing. But even this cannot be attained.

The Rebbe also emphasized the high level of repentance. You may fall to the lowest depths, Heaven forbid. But no matter how far you have fallen, it is still forbidden to give up hope. Repentance is even higher than the Torah — therefore, there is absolutely no place for despair. The most important thing is never to give up, but to continue to cry out and pray to God.



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*The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman's chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.*